



## Profiteering from Urban Safety, Fear of Crime and Earthquakes in Istanbul

**Halil Ibrahim Bahar**  
Turkey

### Abstract

There is a direct relationship between urban safety in Istanbul and neoliberal urban planning policies that has led to the creation of a new wealthy class. Such a class has risen from profiteering from land deals and the construction of housing and offices, both of which were politically facilitated. The classification of areas of the city as being at risk from crime and earthquake, together with the legalisation of urban change projects, have resulted in whole sections of the community being declared at risk and moved to other areas with an attendant rise in social exclusion.

### Keywords

Turkey; Istanbul; earthquake; urbanisation; urban security; urban regeneration.

*Please cite this article as:*

Bahar HI (2019) Profiteering from urban safety, fear of crime and earthquakes in Istanbul. *International Journal for Crime, Justice and Social Democracy* 8(4): 33-46. <https://10.5204/ijcjsd.v8i4.937>



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International Licence](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/). As an open access journal, articles are free to use with proper attribution. ISSN: 2202-8005

## Introduction

Throughout its history, Istanbul was—and still is—the largest trade centre for the Balkans, the Black Sea territories and the Middle East. During the nineteenth century, trade in Istanbul simultaneously grew in parallel with trade across the world; the city embraced its rightful place on the world stage in terms of business, banks and insurance. Foreign businesspeople settled in the city and organised chambers of commerce; foreign banks chose Istanbul as the location for their regional headquarters. From the 1980s onwards, Istanbul's regional role assumed a new importance as oil prices rose and business and construction sectors experienced sudden growth. At the same time, Istanbul became a new centre of tourism for the Middle East. Arab banks opened branches in the city to benefit from its connections with the West. Istanbul also became the place for businesses from the Turkic and Caucasian republics to meet with their western equivalents in pursuance of economic activity (Keyder 2009: 23).

The efforts outlined in this study are classed by the elite as efforts to make Istanbul a regional centre again, as it used to be historically. This article argues that Istanbul's growth, security and redevelopment is not being managed to meet the needs of an ever-expanding population, but is a consequence of neoliberal policies influenced by globalisation and shaped by economic and political powers. It would be wrong to consider the issue of security in Istanbul merely in terms of rising crime figures and fear of crime. Along with investigating the reasons for the increase in security-related problems, the article suggests possible solutions to these problems and how they may be put into practice.

Just as Istanbul's security problems can be seen from a range of viewpoints, it is also possible to find it within other problems experienced in the city, where it may grow until its presence can be seen clearly (Erder 2006). It is crucial to consider the changes that have occurred in Istanbul over the past 50 years. This period saw the beginning and gradual increase of neoliberal policies that led to the creation of an ever-broadening economic abyss between the rich and poor of Istanbul, in turn producing new cracks in the social fabric, a phenomenon that has been widely noted (Boratav 1995).

The concept of security includes many elements, of which crime and victimisation are only a couple. There is a very close relationship between urban security and urban design, urban change and housing policy. In terms of Istanbul's social structure, nowadays there seems to be much more separation between the social strata than was the case not too long ago. This separation may be termed 'spatial segregation', which is evident in gated communities, shopping malls and leisure centres that have emerged as a result of urban change and housing policies. Urban equality has been dwindled along with an attendant rise in social exclusion and alienation among the residents of Istanbul. There is a clear need for urban planning to concentrate on projects that remove, or at the very minimum reduce, this divisive segregation. Rather than creating areas in which residents of the city seem to be effectively imprisoned, greater attention should be paid to optimising existing social networks and reinforcing effective links between such groupings.

Urban policy in Istanbul currently appears confined to the creation of an urban identity based solely on the construction of business premises and shopping malls. Such an urbanisation policy will lead to Istanbul becoming a city inhabited by only the highest and lowest of social classes, instead of being a city populated by a spectrum of social classes in which all of the city's inhabitants see themselves as truly belonging to Istanbul.

The Chicago School's ecological approach to urban systems differentiated physical locations by their functions and defined the whole as the sum of interactions between individual elements (McKenzie 1924; Wirth 1938; Park, Ernest and McKenzie 1984). Members of the believed that the overall organisation of locations is based upon interactions between ecological units such as

housing, factories and offices, each of which has different functions, but when considered together, become a functional whole.

When considering security in cities and quality of life in this context, matters that influence the lives of residents, at both the individual and community level, must also be taken into account. Matters such as residents' housing, where they work, which schools they attend, choice of transport (individual and/or mass modes), use of city parks, roads, traffic and infrastructure all become important factors for consideration. These factors become particularly important in critical incidents affecting the city. Istanbul lies on an earthquake fault zone. The earthquake that hit Istanbul on 17 August 1999 and led to the deaths of around 18,000 people caused anxiety and put firmly on the agenda the city's infrastructure and its ability to withstand an earthquake or other disasters. Since the disaster, fear of earthquakes has played a large role in shaping Istanbul's housing market (Çavdar 2013).

Lefebvre (1976) discusses the relationship between city planning and political power. He points out that the government and other powerful elites bring themselves into existence through space. To attain and maintain their sovereign powers, the government or leading elites continually intervene spatially. Soja and Hadjimichalis (1985) refer to human spatiality as a construct that must be seen as a social product created and structured like other social forms, out of the fundamental relations of production. Individuals and the objects of production are combined "in a specific structure of the distribution of relations, places and functions (Althusser and Balibar 1970; in Soja and Hadjimichalis 1985: 60). This article will examine the issue of security in Istanbul that has arisen as a result of neoliberal policies and globalisation. It does not suggest that the issues of space, crime and anxiety related to safety and policing, and their proposed solutions peculiar to Istanbul, can be ignored. However, this article seeks to highlight problems other than traditional issues of public order in Istanbul. It instead focuses on the speculative development of the city's central areas, which has occurred in the name of 'urban change' but have capitalised on residents' fear of crime and earthquakes and was facilitated by corrupt land practices and lack of attention to white-collar crime. These factors have led to the eviction of people from their homes to another part of the city and the creation of a new class of wealth. It is clear that both local and central government politics have influenced urban policy and decision making.

The article draws on both quantitative and qualitative data; the former was gathered from a survey of householders in Istanbul. The survey aimed to establish the extent to which crime was seen to be a problem, the issues in their environment respondents felt were most unsettling and the extent to which they felt safe on public transport, in parks and other public spaces. The householder survey found that fear of earthquakes and the issue of structural security have influenced individual feelings of safety.

### **Neoliberalisation of urban space in Istanbul**

Neoliberalisation comprises a range of policies aimed at extending market discipline, competition and commodification throughout society to secure the 'vital cycle of economic growth' (Tok et al. 2015: 450). Such policies may include deregulation of state control over industries and markets, curbing of organised labour, privatisation of public services and assets, relinquish responsibility for welfare support, among others. The implementation of neoliberalisation relies on national restructuring projects (Peck, Theodore and Brenner 2009) and introduces new spheres of collaboration for actors in the private and public domains. Indeed, neoliberalisation can be seen as a state strategy designed to create new conditions for capital accumulation.

In the 1980s, Turkey substituted its previous national development strategy for economic liberalisation to guide the country into the fold of global capitalism. The flagship of this process was Istanbul, whose city centre—under the banner 'marketing Istanbul'—was transformed into

a hub of services and consumption to attract tourists and business (Keyder 1996, 1999, 2009; Yonucu 2008: 56).

Over the past three decades, Istanbul has undergone a neoliberal transformation with ever taller offices, and banks and residential towers that look down on a proliferation of shopping malls, restaurants, cafes, nightclubs, galleries and performance spaces. Since establishing the Istanbul Biennial in 1987 and opening the Istanbul Museum of Modern Art in 2004, the city's arts calendar has been filling annually (Candan and Kolluoğlu 2008).

Further, alongside the changes outlined above, that icon of globalisation—the gated community—has proliferated in Istanbul following its first appearance in the mid-1980s. Such communities are mainly but not exclusively located on the margins of the city (Candan and Kolluoğlu 2008).

### **The politics of urban regeneration in Istanbul**

Efforts to create wealth from Istanbul's urban space are exemplified by the political administration using its legal powers to facilitate the acquisition of public land and accelerating the identification of space for large new build projects under 'urban regeneration initiatives' (Kahraman 2013: 18). It is not accidental that Istanbul looks like the world's largest building site. As commentators have noted, 'Istanbul is a city without ownership. When any opportunity to clumsily interfere with its structure can be taken along the lines of "if we just break through here" without any consideration of the city's origins and beauty, completely ignoring its striking history and aesthetics, then no-one [*sic*]owns Istanbul' (Çavdar and Tan 2013: 7).

As a policy strategy to increase land values in the centre of the city, the lowest income groups have been compelled to evacuate from the centre of the city to its furthest margins. From the year 2000 onwards, Turkey appeared to be in the grip of a neoliberalism that has led to the creation of a whole new legal framework to facilitate speculative development in urban spaces and has redefined urban lives and relationships. The government has used urban space as a vehicle for generating wealth, whether to increase its power or simply to profit from sales of public land is a matter of debate. However, it is clear that these changes have swept away the old order with its traditional social and political relationships and hierarchies (Kahraman 2013).

There is a recognised relationship between cities and capitalism. Urban capitalism is predicated on residents' relationships with locations. Wealthy locations of the city tend to be monopolised by the elite while the government, instead of bringing order to such matters, seem complicit in this approach to land use (Kahraman 2013). According to Harvey (1993), the dynamics of urbanisation cannot be understood as being independent of wealth accumulation. In situations where production and consumption of goods have taken place and led to a first cycle of accumulated wealth that cannot be reinvested, a way will be found to use the surplus profits for a second cycle, whether this comes from the government or the markets. A significant portion of accumulated wealth in the second cycle will be directed to the urban built environment. Hence, investment in buildings not only solve the problem of accumulating large profit but will also generate more wealth. By this stage, the built environment itself has become a vehicle for capital production. Consequently, productive urban spaces can be seen as a type of functional shelter against periodic structural crises inherent in capitalism (Harvey 1993).

Istanbul is not only important as the centre of the country's economy; it is also seen as the place where new practices are introduced: a functional model for the rest of the nation. The main objective of policies to facilitate urban change projects was to establish a global city. Those working to achieve this in Istanbul had to create a city that would attract wealth in terms of investor finance in large new building projects. As new laws were introduced, the threat of

redevelopment grew, particularly in urban areas occupied by low-income groups who could not meet the ever-spiralling costs (Kahraman 2013).

In terms of both their aims and content, urban change policies and practices in Turkey differ from those of many highly developed countries. This difference is based on the fact that there is always a political aim behind any urban project in Turkey. It is common knowledge that when political actors claim urban change is needed to renew run-down areas within cities, the reality is that they wish to initiate a phase of development that will lead to financial speculation in real estate in the area (Balaban 2013).

In England and the US, urban change projects appear to focus on areas of cities that are derelict and have been effectively abandoned, and work is carried out to physically regenerate such areas. During the 1980s, these countries have led the way for many other countries in implementing 'flagship' or 'prestige' projects in the name of urban change. The vast majority of such projects were designed to encourage growth in the local economy through the provision of new office space and industrial buildings (Healey 1995). The main purpose of such urban change projects during the 1980s was to attract more investors to cities, in line with the 'entrepreneurial city' model and thus, giving cities a whole new image (Hubbard 1995). Principles of sustainability then appeared and led to environmental change projects that aimed to simultaneously encourage economic growth, ensure social justice and preserve the environment (Couch and Dennemann 2000).

The city centre of Istanbul appears to have lost its traditional residents, typically from the upper- and middle-class income groups. What was once housing owned by these groups has been turned into office accommodation for large corporations and other urban organisations. Dilapidated buildings were often demolished and replaced by new constructions. Even owners who remained in their properties found themselves forced out as their neighbourhood became more run-down and designated for regeneration. It has become the norm for urban planners to designate whole swathes of the city as suffering from 'inner city decay' (Erder 2006: 38–39). Those who are marginalised or poor are increasingly stigmatised to the point where poverty itself is seen as a sign of criminality. Locations where the urban poor reside are labelled as 'urban hellholes', 'no-go areas' and 'lawless zones' while their residents are represented as inherently dangerous or as 'enemies within' (Yonucu 2008: 53). In Istanbul, some working-class neighbourhoods have become 'dangerous' areas, with young people in these areas suffering particularly negative effects.

## **Methodology**

The data presented in this article were collected by the International Strategic Research Organization as part of the four-year (2008–2012) Istanbul Urban Safety Project. Quantitative and qualitative methods were used in the study. Quantitative methods included a survey and analysis of secondary data. With regard to the qualitative dimension of the research, semi-structured, open-ended interviews took place with a number of senior officials involved in urban safety in Istanbul. Almost 100 such interviews were carried out with Istanbul members of parliament, neighbourhood leaders, representatives of the Governor's Office, senior government personnel in Istanbul, city-wide and district education authorities, officials from the police and judiciary, academics from Istanbul-based universities, leaders of primary and secondary schools, private citizens and representatives of the chambers of commerce and manufacture. This stage of the research was conducted to establish relationships between a wide range of stakeholders in urban safety in Istanbul, and to facilitate dialogue and coordination between public and private organisations.



### **Sampling**

In terms of the survey, the sample of people approached for the survey was identified from baseline data collected by the Turkish Statistical Institute; the application of multi-level, stratified group techniques was planned. However, such techniques would have necessitated extremely large samples, the administration and management of which would have been beyond the scope of the project. Hence, the decision was taken to utilise probability sampling. Random sampling was deemed inappropriate for a city the size and diversity of Istanbul, where each district and neighbourhood can contain a wide range of social and physical conditions. In this event, baseline data enabled the identification of a representative sample of 3140 households.

Much time was devoted to questionnaire design prior to piloting the questionnaire. The questionnaire was piloted in three European districts of Istanbul (Bakırköy, Sarıyer and Beşiktaş) and three Asian districts of the city (Üsküdar, Ümraniye and Kadıköy). The piloting involved 200 questionnaires across these districts. Following the pilot exercise, questionnaires were distributed to 3,140 households, of which 2,309 (73.5%) were returned with all questions answered, save for some gaps in optional personal details.

The 2,309 household respondents consisted of 1,315 females and 994 males aged between 18 and 65 ( $X = 38.35$ ;  $SS = 10.7$ ). Of these participants, some ( $n = 1,659$ ; 72.8%) identified as being married and others ( $n = 484$ ; 21.2%) as single. The levels of education in this sample ranged from primary school or lower ( $n = 450$ ; 19.7%); middle school completed ( $n = 580$ ; 25.4%); high school completed ( $n = 891$ ; 39.1%); and university graduates ( $n = 358$ ; 15.7%). Over half of the participants ( $n = 1,187$ ; 52%) claimed to be unemployed.

### **Data collection instrument**

The questionnaire collected demographic information alongside questions directly relevant to the study. These questions were designed by research staff in the Istanbul Urban Safety Project following a broad search of the available literature. Participants were requested to provide their gender, age, level of education, occupation and marital status. Specific questions related to crime and security were: 'Do you think crime is a problem in Istanbul?', 'What are the three things that cause you most worry in the area where you live?', 'What do you think is the most serious security problem in Istanbul?', 'When choosing a property in which you will live what is your most important priority?' 'Do you think public institutions are prepared for problems arising in the aftermath of natural disasters?'

In addition to these specific questions, individuals were asked to rate how secure they felt while taking public transport; how safe they felt when walking in parks and gardens during the day and at night; and how safe Istanbul felt like a city. The rating was on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is 'very unsafe' and 10 is 'very safe'. The data collected were analysed with an SPSS data analysis software.

Residents approached for the survey were provided with an overview of the general aims of the study and the necessary instructions for completing the questionnaire. All residents approached were told that their participation was entirely voluntary and that they could choose not to answer any of the questions if they did not wish to. Finally, it was made clear that data gathered for the study would be confidential and would only be utilised for scientific purposes.

## Results

As can be seen in Table 1, a total of 98% of the respondents believed crime was a problem; 65.1% considered it 'a very serious problem' and a further 32.9% believed it as merely 'a serious problem'.

**Table 1: The seriousness of crime**

<i>Do you think crime is a problem in Istanbul?</i>	
A very serious problem	65.1%
A serious problem	32.9%
Not a serious problem	1.8%
Not a very serious problem	0.2%

n=2,309

In Table 2, respondents were asked to choose *only* the three things that cause them most worry. As can be seen from the results, muggers (51.6%), followed by glue sniffers and street children (44.2%) and traffic and public order incidents (27% each) were among the three things that cause them most worry. Interestingly, only 24.9% of the respondents indicated that terrorist incidents were among the top three security issues they worried about the most.

**Table 2: Three issues that cause worry in the neighbourhood**

<i>What are the three things that cause you most worry in the area where you live?</i>		
	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
Glue sniffers/street children	44.2%	55.8%
Muggers	51.6%	48.4%
Traffic	27.0%	73.0%
Terrorist incidents	24.9%	75.1%
Public order incidents	27.0%	73.0%
Organised crime/armed skirmishes	14.2%	85.8%
Harassment	14.4%	85.6%
People's insensitivity	11.2%	88.8%
Social events	8.3%	91.7%

n= 2,309

The question described in Table 3 was designed to explore respondents' thoughts on security problems across the entire city of Istanbul, as opposed to issues confined to their residential neighbourhoods. The responses revealed that the security problems most commonly identified by respondents as being the most serious in Istanbul, were terrorism (19.4%), public order incidents (17.8%) and glue sniffers and/or street children (17.3%).

**Table 3: The most serious security problem in Istanbul**

<i>What do you think is the most serious security problem in Istanbul?</i>	
Public order incidents	17.8%
Glue sniffers/street children	17.3%
Organised crime/armed skirmishes	10.8%
Terrorist incidents	19.4%
Immigration	11.5%
Traffic	11.9%
Social events	10.0%
Other	1.3%

n= 2,309

Security and the ability to withstand earthquakes are the two most commonly identified priorities identified by respondents as important when choosing a property for a home (Table 4).

**Table 4: Priorities in choosing a property**

<i>When choosing a property in which you will live, what is your most important priority?</i>	
Security	28.9%
Must have a clear title deed	3.0%
Must be able to withstand earthquakes	25.1%
The price of the property	12.5%
Neighbours and other people in the area	9.4%
District in which property is located	17.9%
Other	3.2%

n= 2,309

Based on the results of the qualitative component of this study, residents of Istanbul do not feel safe in the city, which suggests the issue is too big for the police alone to handle.

The responses described in Table 5 clearly shows that respondents believed that relevant public institutions were not prepared for problems that might arise in the aftermath of natural disasters: an overwhelming 82.7% of the respondent sample believed this to be the case.

**Table 5: Public institutions and natural disasters**

<i>Do you think public institutions are prepared for problems arising in the aftermath of natural disasters?</i>	
They are definitely not prepared	27.8%
They are not prepared	54.9%
They are prepared	12.7%
They are definitely prepared	4.6%

n= 2,309

In addition, respondents were asked to rate the level of security on public transport in Istanbul, on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being 'very safe'. The mean rating on this question was 4.15



(median = 4.00, mode = 3 and standard deviation = 2.249; n= 2,309). As all measures of average (mean, mode and median) were grouped closely together with no divergent value, a normal distribution tending to the positive was found. In other words, our sample of Istanbul household respondents felt safe when travelling on public transport in the city.

We asked the respondents to also rate on the same scale, how safe they felt in Istanbul's parks and gardens during the day. The mean rating was 5.14 (median = 5.00, mode = 5.00 and standard deviation = 1.70). As above, the close grouping of all measures of average indicates a normal distribution. However, this result was only obtained when divergent values were omitted from the calculation, which suggests that while householders in Istanbul felt safe in public parks and gardens during the day, a higher level of safety and therefore, greater public satisfaction, could be achieved if appropriate preventative measures were carried out.

The results for respondents' sense of safety in parks and gardens at night were not very different, as expected. The mean rating of safety was 2.26 (median = 2.00, mode = 2 and standard deviation = 1.687). With divergent values excluded, this close grouping of the measures of average was normally distributed. However, whether this shows a positive or negative tendency is not a matter for debate: residents out and about in Istanbul's parks and gardens do not feel safe at night.

Fear of crime can affect patterns of urban behaviour. Both societal structure and its spatial organisation may exhibit such fear through anxiety, suspicion and doubt related to crime and problems with security per se (Harries 1981). Fear of crime can also arise from, as well as shape, social relationship structures (Kahana et al. 1977; Klecka and Bishop 1977; Smith 1976).

In relation to city-wide safety, our sample of Istanbul household respondents rated safety (on a scale of 1 to 10) as follows: mean = 4.46, median = 5.00, mode = 5 and standard deviation = 1.856. The proximity of the three values of average, together with the absence of divergent values, indicates a normal distribution with a positive tendency.

Security experts, local leaders and academics who took part in interviews for this research stated that the issue of security in Istanbul should be considered in terms of both the social and physical environment. Given the structure of neighbourhoods, the viewpoints of residents and Istanbul's urbanisation process, it would seem beneficial to investigate life at an individual level in slum areas where local mafia and street gangs engage in a range of illegal activities and where the official administration has failed to establish a presence. It must be borne in mind that across the city as a whole, one or more areas of dereliction may be allowed to exist as a means to contain the problem. However, such social decay can shape individuals' views of security within a community. The underlying reasons for perceived inadequacies in Istanbul's security may be revealed when we examine the issue in terms of neighbourhood structure.

If we wish to preserve the fabric of neighbourhoods, consideration must be given to issues such as families migrating from other towns and cities, which have led to sharp rises in population together with a weakening of social control at the neighbourhood level. The result is city areas where residents never really get to know one another. Eventually, this may result in problem-ridden and unhealthy neighbourhoods. Such problematic neighbourhoods may degenerate into slums with insufficient or non-existent local services and a tendency for criminalisation and the commission of crime (Törüner 2006). The presence of individuals from different cultures who cannot understand each other can increase feelings of exclusion and may accelerate marginalisation and disaffection.

### **Discussion: Profiteering from fear of crime and earthquakes**

Respondents to the questionnaire felt safe in Istanbul's parks and gardens by day, but not at night. In terms of safety across the city in general, the average rating was 4.46 points out of 10. Results from the qualitative research showed that quality of life in Istanbul has been affected by waves of migration, areas of physical dereliction, weakening of traditional social patterns and the creation of rich and poor ghettos. Factors such as poor environmental conditions, insufficient housing, traffic problems, inadequate infrastructure across the city as a whole, lack of defences against earthquakes, floods and other natural disasters, have negative effects on individuals and communities with consequential social tensions that must be addressed at the root using preventative measures.

In addition, it is crucial that the link between awareness of security and social interaction is recognised. That is, an individual may find him/herself living in a neighbourhood that s/he has problems integrating into, and the extent of such problems can lead to feelings of loneliness and exclusion. Hence, that individual, unable to express feelings of frustration, may react to the situation by committing crime. S/he will strive to replace social capital with criminal capital as a route to finding a role within the community.

Other notable findings of the survey include the view that it is wrong to reduce security concerns to mere incidents of public disorder; further, the relationship between security and the physical and social environment is critical. In relation to this latter finding, the survey identified a link between matters of security, neoliberal policies and speculative development in Istanbul. It further found that fear of both earthquakes and crime has been exaggerated, and using a rationale of urban regeneration, new laws and policies on urban infrastructure have changed the urban fabric of Istanbul. Further, it is claimed that such opportunistic urban policies were established as a solution to problems with maintaining security in the city. In terms of establishing a structure for a city and templates for interaction therein, an ideal model would be to ensure that people from different sections of society have reciprocal relationships and work together to minimise conflict. Urban space plays a large role in such an exercise. In the process of rebuilding urban space, we have witnessed the consequences of removing opportunities for interaction between different groups. In Istanbul, the removal of opportunities for interactions has accelerated the development of feelings of alienation and exclusion between different sections of society.

In large metropolitan areas such as Istanbul, 'risk' itself becomes a vehicle for investment in changes. Public perception of earthquake risk enhanced and the public information about earthquake hazard had significant impact on house values (Onder et al. 2004: 181).

The very word 'risk' carries implications of loss and those caught up in such an atmosphere become prisoners of their own anxieties. In terms of Istanbul and its urban space, the ever-increasing, self-generating ranges of anxieties include fear of crime, of crisis, of earthquakes, of eviction, of unemployment and so on. These anxieties may build to the point where the alternative, which is to start afresh, holds attraction. This whole issue of risk does not just affect the middle classes; it is a generic problem across the entirety of society (Yılmaz 2013).

Our interviewees bore testament to the fact that uncertainty of life in Istanbul has led to an increase in anxiety. The city's middle classes seek to distance and separate themselves spatially and thus, legitimising the need for security. The politics of risk in Istanbul have been used effectively to implement changes based on economic profiteering.

In Istanbul, there is a clear relationship between the growing fear of crime and efforts to profit from urban spaces claimed to be free of crime. Fear of victimisation, together with urban regeneration and intervention in areas of dereliction, have all been legitimised. While the fear of becoming a victim of crime abounds, no-one can actually define the causes of this fear. Urban

change projects have eradicated Istanbul's traditional mixed-class neighbourhoods. People prefer to move to expensive yet secure gated communities rather than live in fear of crime. Justifications such as preserving cultural heritage, starting afresh, eliminating public order problems, have all been employed to create new fields for profiteering (Erkilet 2013).

## **Conclusion**

Neoliberal urban planning policies have led to a decrease in social relationships, a total lack of working partnerships between sectors and a perception that security is purely a matter of policing. A potential solution may lie in treating security as both a physical and social issue and raising awareness among the population of Istanbul of their rights to the city and their ability to be a part of the solution to its current security problems.

Based on both qualitative and quantitative evidence, it is clear that Istanbul is a city suffering from a fear of crime and natural disasters. The survey results showed that fear of crime across the city as a whole was greater than at the neighbourhood level. In terms of their own neighbourhoods, muggers, glue sniffers and public disorder were identified as one of the top three factors causing the respondents most worry. It is interesting to find that while it was not regarded as a big security issue at the neighbourhood level, the survey results for Istanbul as a whole showed that the most important security issue was terrorism. Results from both the survey and the interviews revealed that concern about crimes and earthquakes played an important role in people's choice of where to live.

A globally observed phenomenon in terms of city design and planning is the tendency to push industrial areas to the edges of the city and reserve the centre for high-level management and financial functions (Sassen 2000). Urban change processes in Istanbul have also resulted in new forms of social exclusion. Manufacturing districts have intentionally been removed from the city centre and replaced with luxury housing, offices and shopping malls. These developments have driven the poor and working classes out of the city centre. A 'global city' does not depend on the country in which it is located; it is merely window-dressing for global markets. In Istanbul, the privileged few have found ways to hold on to their wealth. The underprivileged have to accept they will never own property and must live in conditions of increasing inequality in the urban environment. Istanbul is not shaped by the needs and desires of its residents but exists to serve large corporations and wealthy investors. Urban change in Istanbul must be evaluated to determine if it was implemented to address economic needs, and whether injection of foreign investment in the construction sector is perceived as a solution to the economic crisis.

Security in Istanbul is a matter that affects more than just the police: global neoliberal economic policies, different socio-economic classes, local and central leadership and the political administration have all played a part in ushering in a new social class based purely on wealth. Hence, it would be wrong to approach security in Istanbul as merely a matter of policing; instead, the effects of the globalisation on security in the city must also be considered. Istanbul's thousands of years of history, the city's fabric, economic and social relationships and the sheer diversity that once held the city together have been sacrificed in the name of profiteering. The people who live in the city are becoming strangers to one another, to themselves and to the city in which they reside. Life is reduced to production and consumption, with limited opportunities for social interaction. It used to be said that every stranger in the city could be a friend; now a stranger is seen as a risk. Such changes also have a negative effect on Istanbul's security. Rather than being based on facts, Istanbulites' views about security in their neighbourhoods and city are built upon perceptions. These perceptions in turn influence urban design and urban regeneration policy. In this context, crime and security have become vehicles for facilitating the deterioration of areas of Istanbul that are seen as ripe for profiteering: residents of such areas are moved to new housing projects while the abandoned buildings are quickly colonised by migrants from

within and outside of Turkey, temporary/seasonal workers and individual criminals and/or organised crime groups. The result is areas in which fear of crime is acute, which then become legitimate targets for legally sanctioned demolition and redevelopment by the newly wealthy, all in the name of urban change.

To reduce anxiety about crime, it should be possible to create sustainable secure neighbourhoods in certain locations and change their physical conditions. However, if the issue of security is reduced to a mere matter of physical conditions, urban security policies may also be reduced in their focus. The social dimension cannot be ignored in planning for urban security. Urban planning must be systemic in approach and involve a range of those with power, from local leaders to officials in charge of planning and approval (Ünsal 2000).

As well as meeting housing needs, local leaders must establish appropriate infrastructure in terms of roads, water, electricity and so on. They must develop suitable areas for recreation such as parks and playing fields; they must ensure that all these areas are maintained. Only when all of this has been organised and put in place, can they truly say they are involved in urban planning. Planning must result in the establishment of cities in which it is possible to live now and in the future, where conurbations have achieved the integration of natural, cultural, economic and social conditions, and political and management decisions form part of a comprehensive approach to urban planning and design. Hence, planning must be a public service that is carried out continuously and systematically, in a way that considers issues of equality, justice and renewability (Toprak 2005).

To make mere residents of the city into true Istanbulites requires urban equality and democratic urbanisation policies that address all levels of society. Urban design, planning and all related projects confirmed for implementation in Istanbul must additionally consider the full range of economic, social, cultural and community dynamics of the city. Such an approach will be highly dependent on the wealthy class, who are currently seen to only support work that sustains or increases their prosperity.

A much broader, more comprehensive approach is necessary when examining issues related to security and their resolution. Hence, any work on security in Istanbul cannot be undertaken using traditional approaches to safety and security but must consider the context of urbanisation, urban change and redevelopment processes.

Urban planning holds the key to the identification and resolution of problems of equality, justice and renewability and thus, to improving the quality of urban life. Urban planning must consider issues of equality and nurture working partnerships between sectors through the application of relevant principles of mutual support, sustainability and public involvement. According to Castells (1978), all cities are centres of political activity. To take urban planning as mere spatial planning and evaluating it purely using a locational framework, is entirely the wrong approach. The starting point must be the establishment of a framework for life in the city that does not limit individual or community sociocultural development, nor hinder those involved in its creation. Urban planning must be a vehicle for bringing order to the shared public lives of citizens and for meeting their common needs.

Hence, the current system of local political relationships can no longer be endured and must be replaced with one that is democratic and inclusive. Only by doing so can inclusive planning policies be created to meet basic needs and implemented in a way that ensures equality, encourages social progress, engages the public, leads to the development of economic, cultural and social rights and results in sustainable solutions.

*Correspondence:* Halil Ibrahim Bahar (PhD), Professor of Sociology, freelance researcher and analyst, Emirgan Mektebi Sok. No:75/1 Sariyer, Istanbul, Turkey. Email: [hibahar@hotmail.com](mailto:hibahar@hotmail.com)

## References

- Balaban O (2013) Neoliberal yeniden yapılanmanın Türkiye kentleşmesine bir diğer armağanı: Kentsel dönüşümde güncelin gerisinde kalmak. In Çavdar A and Tan P (eds) *Istanbul: Müstesna Şehrin İstisna Hali*: 51–78. Istanbul: Sel.
- Boratav K (1995) *İstanbul ve Anadolu'dan Sınıf Profilleri*. Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yayınları.
- Candan AB and Kolluoğlu B (2008) Emerging spaces of neoliberalism: A gated town and a public housing project in Istanbul. *New Perspectives on Turkey* 39: 5–46. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0896634600005057>
- Castells M (1978) *City, Class and Power*. London: Palgrave.
- Çavdar A (2013) Orta Sınıfın Evi. In Çavdar A and Tan P (eds) *Istanbul: Müstesna Şehrin İstisna Hali*: 149–164. Istanbul: Sel.
- Çavdar A and Tan P (2013) İstanbul: Müstesna Şehrin İstisna Hali. In Çavdar A and Tan P (eds) *Istanbul: Müstesna Şehrin İstisna Hali*: 7–14. Istanbul: Sel.
- Couch C and Dennemann A (2000) Urban regeneration and sustainable development in Britain: The example of the Liverpool Ropewalks Partnership. *Cities* 17(2): 137–147. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0264-2751\(00\)00008-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0264-2751(00)00008-1)
- Erder S (2006) *Refah Toplumunda Getto*. Istanbul: Istanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları.
- Erkilet A (2013) Düzgün Aileler 'Yeni Gelenler'e Karşı: Korku Siyaseti, Tahliyeler ve Kentsel Ayırışma. In Çavdar A and Tan P (eds) *Istanbul: Müstesna Şehrin İstisna Hali*: 127–146. Istanbul: Sel.
- Harries KD (1981) Alternative denominators in conventional crime rates. In Brantingham PJ and Brantingham PL (eds) *Environmental Criminology*: 147–165. London: Sage Publications.
- Harvey D (1993) *Social Justice and the City*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
- Healey P (1995) The institutional challenge for sustainable urban regeneration. *Cities* 12(4): 221–230. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0264-2751\(95\)00043-L](https://doi.org/10.1016/0264-2751(95)00043-L)
- Hubbard P (1995) Urban design and local economic development: A case study in Birmingham. *Cities* 12(4): 243–251. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0264-2751\(95\)00041-J](https://doi.org/10.1016/0264-2751(95)00041-J)
- Kahana E, Liang J, Felton B, Fairchild T and Harel Z (1977) Perspectives of aged on victimization, 'ageism' and their problems in urban society. *Gerontologist* 17(2): 121–129. DOI: [10.1093/geront/17.2.121](https://doi.org/10.1093/geront/17.2.121).
- Kahraman T (2013) Kent Hukukunun Yeni Yüzü: Düzenleyici Devletten Seçkinleştirici Devlete. In Çavdar A and Tan P (eds) *Istanbul: Müstesna Şehrin İstisna Hali*: 17–48. Istanbul: Sel.
- Keyder C (1996) *Ulusal Kalkınmacılığın İflası*. 2. Baskı, Istanbul: Metis Yayınları.
- Keyder C (1999) (ed) *Istanbul: Between the Global and the Local*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Keyder C (2009) Arka Plan. In Keyder Ç (ed) *İstanbul Küresel ile Yerel Arasında*: 9–42. Istanbul: Metis.
- Klecka WR and Bishop GF (1978) Neighborhood Profiles of Senior Citizens in Four American Cities: A Report of Findings to the National Council of Senior Citizens. Ohio: Behavioral Science Laboratory, University of Cincinnati.
- Lefebvre H (1976) *Survival of Capitalism*. London: Alison and Busby.
- McKenzie RD (1924) The ecological approach to the study of the human community. *American Journal of Sociology*. 30: 287–301. DOI: [10.1086/213698](https://doi.org/10.1086/213698).
- Önder Z, Dökmeci V and Keskin B (2004) The impact of public perception of earthquake risk on Istanbul's housing market. *Journal of Real Estate Literature*. 12 (30): 181-194. Available at <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44103487> (accessed 10 October 2019).
- Park RE, Burgess EW and McKenzie RD (1984) *The City*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Peck J, Theodore N and Brenner N (2009) Neoliberal urbanism: Models, moments, mutations. *SAIS Review of International Affairs* 29(1): 49–66. <http://doi.org/10.1353/sais.0.0028>



- Sassen S (2000) The global city: Strategic site, new frontier. *American Studies* 41(2/3): 79–95. Available at <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40643231> (accessed 25 April 2014).
- Smith DL (1976) The aftermath of victimization: Fear and suspicion. In Veano EC (ed.) *Victims and Society*: 203–219. Washington DC: Visage Press.
- Soja EW and Hadjimichalis C (1985) Between geographical materialism and spatial fetishism. *Antipode* 17(2/3): 59–67. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8330.1979.tb00133.x>
- Tok E, McSparren J, Al Merekhi M, Elghaish H and Ali FM (2015). Crafting smart cities in the Gulf region: A comparison of Masdar and Lusail. In Harrison D (ed.) *Handbook of Research on Digital Media and Creative Technologies*: 448-460. Hershey PA: IGI Global.
- Toprak Z (2005) *Uluslararası Mevzuatta Planlama ve Kent Yönetimine Etkisi*. Available at <http://web.deu.edu.tr/gundem21/sunum.ppt> (accessed 25 April 2014).
- Törüner Y (2006) Istanbul'a Göç. Available at <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/2006/09/04/yazar/toruner.html> (accessed 16 August 2010).
- Ünsal F (2000) Planlamaya Kentsel Siyaset Çerçevesinde Bir Yaklaşım. PhD Thesis, Mimar Sinan University, Turkey.
- Wirth L (1938) Urbanism as a way of life: The city and contemporary civilization. *American Journal of Sociology* 44(1): 1–24. DOI: 10.1086/217913.
- Yılmaz C (2013) Orta sınıflar üzerine düşünmek: İstanbul'da orta sınıfların ajandasına risk yazmak. In Çavdar A and Tan P (eds) *İstanbul: Müstesna Şehrin İstisna Hali*: 99–123. Istanbul: Sel.
- Yonucu D (2008) A story of a squatter neighbourhood: From the place of the “dangerous classes” to the “place of danger”. *Berkeley Journal of Sociology* 52: 50–72. Available at <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41035633> (accessed 25 April 2014).